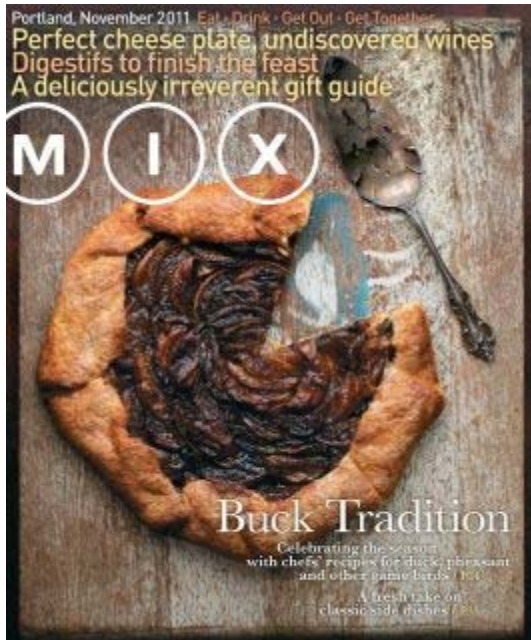


# Game Day



*"Celebrating the season with chefs' recipes for delicious game birds," by Danielle Centoni, November 2011*

Turkey isn't the only bird worthy of your holiday table. Follow the lead of local chefs and try your hand at more unusual poultry options

Americans roast turkeys on Thanksgiving.

It's what we do. But it's also what we don't do the other 364 days of the year. Doesn't it make you wonder? If we love the bird so much that we organize a national holiday around it, why don't we cook it more often?

Let's be honest: We don't actually love it that much.

Now, that's not to say turkey doesn't have its merits. But a whole roasted turkey is a big, unwieldy commitment. Not the most practical option if you're serving a small group. And since it wouldn't be Thanksgiving without poultry, the only alternatives to the big bird — turkey breast or a chicken — hardly seem holiday-worthy.

But wait. A peek at Portland menus tells us that there's a lot more feathered fauna to choose from. Smaller birds, like pheasant, squab and quail, or slightly larger duck and guinea fowl make regular appearances at local restaurants.

"They're just more interesting," says chef Tony Meyers of Serratto restaurant. "To me, a turkey has no flavor."

Even better, game birds (which home cooks can order at many meat counters) are downright practical. "They're fast to work with. They're easy," says Meyers, who will be teaching a class on cooking with game at In Good Taste on Nov. 15. "You can pair a lot more flavors with them and take advantage of seasonality, especially in fall and winter. Nuts and mushrooms, herbs, apples and citrus. They always remind me of game birds."

Small, flavorful, unexpected. Clearly game birds are a great alternative to a turkey when you're planning a special dinner with just a few guests. So we asked five local chefs to share

their favorite celebratory recipes with us. From bourbon-glazed duck to pheasant cooked under a brick, we've gathered five gorgeous dishes waiting to give your holiday table a boost.

"It's not your average dish that your guests will see at their next party," says Meyers of his stuffed quail. "I'm pretty sure they're going like it."

## QUAIL STUFFED WITH APPLES AND CHANTERELLES



Recipe adapted from TONY MEYERS, Serratto, Portland  
Photograph by MIKE DAVIS

*Makes 4 servings*

Though tiny, these birds are packed with flavor — but not so much that they venture into gamy territory. True, there's not a whole lot of meat on these bones, but chef Tony Meyers' rich stuffing of apples, sausage and chanterelle mushrooms makes up for it. A piquant bed of lightly dressed arugula offsets all those rich flavors.

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 3 ounces Italian sausage
- 1 large Honeycrisp apple, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch dice
- 1/2 small yellow onion, cut into 1/4-inch dice
- 1-1/2 cups chanterelle mushrooms, roughly chopped
- 1/2 cup walnuts, roughly chopped
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme
- Zest of half a lemon
- 2 to 3 tablespoons apple brandy
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 semi-boneless quail (see note)

- 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil (divided)
- 1 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 (5-ounce) package baby arugula

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large sauté pan set over medium-high heat, melt the butter. Add sausage and brown for 1 minute. Add apple, onion and mushrooms; sauté until tender. Add walnuts, thyme and lemon zest. Cook for another minute or two, then deglaze the pan with brandy. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Remove from heat and let cool.

In a food processor, pulse the mixture for a few seconds until it just starts to come together (do not purée until smooth!). Stuff each quail with the mixture (about 3 to 4 ounces each).

Set a large sauté pan or Dutch oven over high heat. Add 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. When hot, add the birds, breast-side down. Sear for 1 minute, transfer to the oven and cook for 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from heat, turn birds over and let rest in the pan for 2 more minutes to finish cooking.

While the quail rests, whisk the remaining 3 tablespoons oil and vinegar together in a large bowl. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Add the arugula and toss to coat.

**To serve:** Slice each quail with a knife directly down the center. Place each on a bed of lightly dressed arugula and serve.

**Note:** It's common to order quail "semi-boneless," which makes it easier to eat and stuff. It will have the breast, backbone and thigh bones removed, but not the bones in the wings or lower legs.